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ABSTRACT

Described are the history, characteristics, and current status of Dutch youth studies attempting to delineate the concrete, day-to-day living experiences of students, young workers, unemployed youngsters, girls, and other young people. Providing an introduction to 'life-world' research on Dutch youth, Section I links research programs to the social problems they address and delineates current characteristics of Dutch youth studies. Loosely, in terms of current usage, a life-world analysis is one that, based on a socio-ecological model, takes into account the subjective experiences and interpretations of subjects. Section II traces the use of the concept of 'life-world' in Dutch youth research, pointing out research problems associated with life-world analyses. Section III provides a social-statistical impression of Dutch youth and Section IV reviews life-world research on youth in schools, tracing a line of studies that progressively particularized aspects of students' positive and negative attitudes toward schools. Findings of studies of the life-world of the family and young women are described in Section V, some of which suggest a transition from an authoritarian towards an egalitarian family and shifts in the female standard biography. The concluding section, VI, focuses on problems of research design in life-world studies. (RH)

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# THE LIFE-WORLD OF DUTCH YOUNGSTERS: SCHOOL AND FAMILY

A RESEARCH REPORT

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# The Life-world of Dutch Youngsters: School and Family

## A Research Report

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### I Youth research in the Netherlands - an introduction

Current Dutch youth research can be characterised as having been influenced by the post-war period, the institutionalisation of the social sciences and by research policy.
First of all, I will go into some aspects of the development of youth research in the Netherlands. Next I will discuss the concept of 'life-world' and its applications within youth research. Thirdly, I will present some social-statistical data on Dutch youth and I will refer to further results of the life-world of school and family. Finally, I will discuss some youth studies in which, to my mind, the concept of 'life-world' is employed in an extremely useful way.

The origin of modern Dutch youth research can be traced back to 15 October 1948, when the then Minister of Education, Art and Science commissioned seven leading social-scientific universities and research institutes to investigate the situation of the so-called 'mass youth'. This project should entail some proposals for the (re)introduction of these youngsters into post-war society.
Thirty-nine years later, July 1987, another ministerial order was sent out - this time only to one private institute - to set up an investigation into the situation of Dutch youth. This project, too, should work out recommendations for modern youth policy.
These two dates mark the period in which Dutch youth research evolved.

The first project fell apart into some hundred sub-projects that were carried out all over the country. These sub-projects used methods such as expert interviews (with headmasters, youth workers, vicars, youth leaders etc.), participating observation (in youth clubs, old working-class districts, rural areas etc.) as well as interviews with youngsters.
Field researchers adopted the then dominant culture-pessimistic notion of 'mass youth' rather reluctantly and readily translated it into the definition 'youngsters from proletarian and sub-proletarian classes'. It was this group of young people which the government was seriously concerned with: these youngsters showed (post-war) symptoms of moral degeneration and the pernicious impact of an (Americanised) mass consumers society, which the political and pedagogical authorities saw already appearing on the horizon.

The results of this first investigation into the life situation of

post-war youth did not justify the ideology of endangered and morally degenerated youth and a few years later, post-war panic had relaxed.
The project was lead by two prominent figures in post-war social-pedagogical debates, Father Perquin and the liberal Langeveld. In line with their tasks, they provided recommendations for the formation of future youth policy. This policy, however, was not realised until some decades later, under different social conditions. It included a reformation of a still very much class-rigid educational system, a modernisation of youth social welfare both of church and state and tighter connections between the various socialisation fields of family, school career guidance and youth work.
In the final reports of Perquin and Langeveld, who combined the various sub-projects and worked out the recommendations, the question was raised as to what exactly the responsibilities were of the educators who guided youngsters on their path to maturity (the title of one of the reports). This is, in fact, the classical question of youth educationalists, i.e. how to structure the status passages of youngsters (Meijers/du Bois-Reymond 1987; du Bois-Reymond/Meijers 1988).

Ever since the origin of Dutch social sciences in the thirties and forties, it has been taken for granted that research activities should produce data which can be readily applied and which are relevant for the formation of social policy (Gastelaars 1985). This close - and sometimes tensed - relation between social policy and social sciences has been maintained and has been normative for research policy.
This - and also the fact that most social science institutes were not founded until after the Second World War - explains why the first large-scale national youth projects did not lead to a proper development of youth research in the decades to come. In the fifties, national politics was preoccupied with social aspects other than those that involved youth. There was no money available for youth research and the newly-established institutes had to turn to religious bodies or local authorities in order to acquire funding. Naturally, those studies focussed on local sub-problems and often lacked a sound theoretical basis.

Nevertheless, the mass youth project of 1948-1953 can be regarded as the first investigation into the life-world of Dutch youngsters, in spite of the fact that the present-day concept of 'life-world' was not employed as such in those days, but rather in terms of the traditional, social-psychological and social-geographical theories of the Amsterdam school (Bovenkerk et al. 1978).
Only one of the then participating institutes, the Catholic (semi-university) Hoogveld Institute with its manager Perquin, frequently carried out youth studies, most of them commissioned and financed by the Dutch government. Because of this continuity of research, the government commissioned the Hoogveld Institute in 1987 to embark again on an investigation into the life-world of youngsters.

As they have had great impact on the development of youth research, I will mention two other early studies focussing on the life-world of

youngsters.
At the start of the youth riots in the fifties, two researchers from Leiden proposed an investigation with which, by means of the method of action research, the life-world of working-class youngsters from Leiden could be described. The researchers clearly aimed at challenging the existing prejudices against these youngsters, thus allowing for proposals concerning youth social welfare (Krantz/Vercruisse 1959). This study can be considered to be the predecessor of subsequent sub-cultural youth research.
The second investigation, carried out by the Dutch youth sociologist Van Hessen - who was, for a long time, the only youth sociologist - shows a remarkable set-up. By means of the oral history method (which was at that time unknown as such and therefore not popular), Van Hessen studied the life-world of the generation of Dutch youngsters at the turn of the century, thus contributing to the development of historic youth research - a discipline which has almost completely been ignored so far (Van Hessen 1964).

Only fairly recently has academic youth research started to develop as a discipline in its own right, surpassing the borderlines of its own field. The reason for this rather slow development (especially when compared to other European countries and in particular the United States) is the relatively young tradition of the social sciences, the continued orientation of pedagogics and social-pedagogics on the humanities and finally the dependence on governmental funding that used to set other priorities for a great number of years. In the fifties, sixties and seventies, youth research was primarily financed by local authorities, churches or youth societies which demanded concrete knowledge on sub-populations of youngsters that was relevant to their policy-making. An example would be the investigation into the leisure activities of youngsters from Helden (friendship, club life, family life) (Martens 1962). This kind of commissioned research was mainly concerned with survey research, with little or no need for a theoretical background. Besides, this example also demonstrates the preoccupation of early youth research with recreation, i.e. the domain of youngsters which reacts most sensitively to modernisations and which very often avoids the influence of educationalists. This preoccupation with leisure time had already been predominant in the mass youth project of the forties and fifties.

Nowadays, Dutch youth research can be characterised by:

- short-term commissioned research
- little orientation on theory
- much inquiry research
- fragmentation across social-scientific disciplines (instead of multi-disciplinary or interdisciplinary cooperation)
- a weak academic infrastructure and little financial support
- little orientation on history and on interest in/ possibilities for longitudinal research

Nevertheless, over the past few years new tendencies have come up that stress the importance of a larger coherence and of new theoretical programmes in which life-world analyses play an important role. A useful overview on the state of literature is given by Matthijsen et al. 1986, du Bois-Reymond et al. 1986, Meijers 1987, Meeuws et al. 1988.

## II The concept of 'life-world' in Dutch youth research

The present crisis of the welfare state, which started in the mid-seventies, increased the public need for and interest in youth analyses and made youth researchers aware of the need for more elaborated theoretical frameworks. In traditional youth studies, many problems which youngsters (as well as policy-makers and educationalists) were faced with never came to light: problems in realising the standard biography and status passages within the school, family life and labour relations under increasingly insecure life perspectives. The supposed integration of separate fields of life became questionable and one could observe a weariness of quantitative analysis methods which shed little light on the concrete day-to-day lives of students, young workers, unemployed youngsters, girls and other groups of youngsters.

According to its social-pedagogical and social-psychological tradition, the previously-mentioned Hoogveld Institute, however, had always been concerned with the situations of youngsters. In the 'mass youth project', it was the only institute that did not rely on expert interviews or other indirect methods of investigation but employed face-to-face interviews instead.
Nowadays, the Hoogveld institute applies a combination of the following theoretical approaches:

- a social-psychological approach which is mainly expressed and operationalized by the concept of self-esteem
- the concept of life-world, based on the model of social-ecological zones developed by Baacke (1983).

According to the present manager of the institute, Mr Van der Linden, there is a clear relation between the concept of life-world and Lewin's life-space model; he nevertheless prefers the concept of life-world because, as he says in one of his recent research reports, 'explicit attention is paid to the affective quality of experience', whereas Lewin's model is more concerned with observation and cognition and lacks the experience dimension. He even goes to such length to say that he considers the social-ecological concept of life-world to be the most adequate theoretical basis for social-pedagogical youth research, if combined with personality theories (Van der Linden 1988:152).

Since the seventies, the Central Statistics Bureau (CBS) has held national inquiries with respect to the life situation of the population and investigates the subjective satisfaction of various groups of the Dutch population with their family, school, labour and leisure situation. What the CBS thus establishes on the basis of quantitative data is also demonstrated by the Hoogveld Institute by means of semi-structured interviews in which the subjective experiences and interpretations of youngsters are taken into account much more seriously. It remains doubtful, though, whether the social-ecologically inspired life-world model can fully compensate for the weaknesses of the inquiry methods. After all, the distinguished social-ecological zones are no more than a pragmatic classification with which the various socialisation fields of youngsters can be examined. The theoretical implications of the antagonistic relation between life-world and system in Habermas' definition are not exploited for data-interpretation (Habermas 1981) - nor is there a continuation of the phenomenological Utrecht school which also uses the concept of life-world (Lippitz et al. 1986).

Also many, usually small-scale and local youth studies carried out at universities which use the concept of life-world are characterised by a lack of solid theoretical frameworks. Life-world has become a collective term embodying a specific kind of research in which the subjective experiences of particular groups of youngsters are explored, usually by means of open or half-open interview techniques. It should be noted, however, that the - albeit diffuse - reception of the concept of life-world has strongly stimulated Dutch youth research; it has even prepared it for commissioned research. Over the past few years, a great many data on the everyday life of youngsters have become available, which in previous years could only be produced indirectly by means of inquiries or (educational) mobility studies or were taken into account only marginally.

The fields which the life-world analyses focus on are primarily the following:

- school and school cultures
- political-cultural youth cultures
- youth unemployment and youth-cultural opinions with respect to the meaning of labour
- social networks of youngsters (with remarkably little attention for the impact of family life)

Over the past few years, special attention has been paid to problems with regard to girls, in order to negate the often cited paradigm 'youth research = boys research'. But in spite of an active women's movement and a hard-won increase of academic women' studies over the past decade, Dutch research into the lives of girls is still in its infancy.

III A social-statistical impression of Dutch youth

17% of the Dutch population consist of youngsters between 15 and 24 years old (for these and following figures, see Social and Cultural Plan Bureau 1985). Even when they are eighteen years old, most youngsters still live with their parents; of the group of 24-year-old adolescents, only 25% have left home. The adolescents' prospects of a life and a room of one's own has decreased over the past few years, both as a result of cuts on personal and family income and by a still insufficient housing supply for financially less privileged groups. Nevertheless, investigations demonstrate that youngsters do not experience their housing problems as insurmountable.

Extended education contributes to a prolonged dependence of youngsters on their parents. 80% of all youngsters between 16 and 18 attend day schools. The general level of education has increased tremendously over the past decade; nevertheless, 15% of all youngsters leave school with no more than only a few years of vocational training and 15% leave general education without obtaining a diploma. In the Netherlands, girls and women have cleared their international educational leeway. Still, 25% of 22-25-year-old women do not have a paid job. The critical situation on the job market reinforces old prejudices against female labour; besides, women are put at a disadvantage objectively (i.e. double job market). At the same time, within the framework of emancipation policy, government intends to link the entitlement to social benefits with the availability for the job market for women over 18 who do not have to care for children.
In 1986, 32.2% of youngsters under 17 and 21.9% of youngsters between 19 and 22 were unemployed. These figures show hardly any difference between young men and young women (CBS 1987). For the former group, youth unemployment has decreased sharply over the past few years, as government and employers have created short-term labour contracts (the so-called job/training schemes) with which they hope to introduce youngsters into the regular labour system. This hope, however, does not come out, as a result of which older unemployed youngsters will become and remain unemployed. Even now, youngsters over 20 who have been unemployed for more than 12 months hardly succeed in acquiring a full-time job. They can be regarded as the 'lost generation', a nightmare which is constantly being referred to by the media (Meijers/Peters 1987).

To conclude this brief social-statistical review, I will present some further remarks on the political opinions of youngsters. When compared to the variety of political parties and to the rest of the population, youngsters tend to have progressive views. Still, their political participation is small, especially with groups of youngsters under 21. Like adults, youngsters perceive unemployment, retrenchment policy and the arms race as the most important problems and accept left-wing programmes more readily than the rest of the population (see also Meeus 1986; Dijkman 1987). With respect to traditional values such as marriage and family, however, they are less progressive. I will go into the results of this opinion survey later.

## IV The school-world

No other field of youth research draws so much attention as the school. Most research is mainly concerned with the official curriculum and school mobility and less so with students and school cultures. In the years between 1970/80, extensive organisatory and curriculum reformations on all levels of education - from kindergarten up to university - stimulated commissioned implementation and evaluation research. In this kind of research, children and youngsters are narrowly defined in their roles of pupils, irrespective of their relations outside the school.

It is worth mentioning that, already before the rise of life-world studies, compensatory education programs shed more light on youngsters outside the school situation. Although evaluation reports on these experiments cannot be looked upon as research into the life-world, they did yield descriptive data on tensions between school and non-school situations of children and youngsters.

In the early eighties, the previously-mentioned Hoogveld Institute carried out the first national study into the life-world of 15-year-old students and their self-esteem. This investigation was commissioned by the Ministry of Education, because of an increasing concern of educators (especially secondary school teachers) with lack of motivation and radically changed behaviour of students.
'Some social factors that threatened the well-being of youngsters were: the various, rapidly evolving social and cultural changes, changes in norms and values, rising divorce rates, deteriorating economic circumstances along with an increase of unemployment. All these factors have a negative impact on youngsters and endanger the socialising function of school'. On the basis of these social implications, the Ministry expressed 'the wish to get a better view of the nature and range of these problems' (Van der Linden/Roeders 1983:6).

Research (i.e. semi-standard interviews, scales and questionnaires) indeed demonstrated that 15-year-olds do not judge the school-world positively; this mainly concerns vocational training and the lower levels of general education. Of the latter, 92% of all students fully or partly agreed with the statement that 'school is like a prison' (as opposed to 67% of students of higher levels of general education). Boys tend to subscribe to this statement more often than girls (80% versus 51%). As can be expected, negative school experiences correlate with a negative sense of self-esteem.

Some results of the most recent studies carried out by the Hoogveld Institute should be dealt with in more detail. One of them is concerned with group discussions of 16-22 year-old students and ex-students, differentiated for type of school, sex, level of urbanisation and geographic region. The second study involves

interviews with 24 students between the age of 12 and 16, differentiated for identical criteria (Van der Linden/Dijkman 1987; Dijkman/Van der Linden 1987). The respondents were asked to comment upon the following aspects:

- school (job experience)
- family situation
- leisure time
- social relations
- expectations for the future

Students have a positive opinion of their (previous) schools; they do not show an 'anti-attitude'. This overall result does not differ from the study carried out in 1983. However, in-depth questions lead up to crucial points and bring to light the elsewhere noticed dichotomy in school experience (Matthijssen 1986; du Bois-Reymond 1988): a dichotomy between the formal and the informal curriculum. Students indicate that they are prepared to bear with school if there is also room for informal activities (enforced by students) within and outside of classes. Having a good time, chatting, teasing teachers and fellow-students etc. are forms of relaxation which all students use, independent of age, type of school or sex (Van der Linden/Dijkman 1987:40 ff). Without these manifestations against the official curriculum, school would be 'boring'.

Between teachers and students one can observe an interplay which seems to be based on a free market model rather than on the authoritarian model of 'adaptation and achievement versus school success' (Willis 1987). Students as well as teachers make school life easier by relaxing the official achievement scheme, and teachers abandon their traditional professional responsibilities with respect to enforcing school achievement. They shift the emotional and social expenses of ill-spent time on to students and their parents.
Students perceive the laissez-faire attitude of teachers as a form of tolerance. The increasingly enforced formalisation of assessment (e.g. numerous tests that are only assessed quantitatively) also contributes to the image of the fair teacher. School conflicts mainly show up when the balance between students and teachers is disturbed, for example by an oldfashioned, strict teacher, by an authoritarian school climate, or by an assault on free time because of excessive homework.

Like their teachers, students make a cost-benefit analysis with regard to the energy they are willing to put into their work at school. They develop a pragmatic approach to learning: they assess the 'product of training' on its future value for the job market and have a low opinion of the value of less relevant subjects (humanities). In all, they have a highly instrumental learning motivation.

As a result of the analysis of the quantitative data, the following six, most frequently mentioned reasons for 'attending school with pleasure' are reported:

- cosy; good atmosphere (45.1%)
- social aspects (33.5%)
- learning, subjects (23%)
- school as an alternative for boredom, doing nothing (21.3%)
- good relationship with teachers (13.9%)
- school is useful, important for the future (13.9%)

The six, most frequently mentioned reasons for 'sometimes not wanting to go to school' are:

- subjects, lessons, curriculum (43.3%)
- long school days, boredom (31.1%)
- test, assessments (17.8%)
- many subjects, much homework (13,3%)
- teachers (13.3%)
- too little sleep (11.1%)

Clearly, in positive school assessment, the informal aspects of sociability and opportunities to contact peers outbalance the formal aspects: school is not looked upon as a learning institution but as a life space, even if students ackowledge its value for the future (see Dijkman/Van der Linden 1987:90 et al.; Jongeling 1986; Tillekens 1986).

The latent tension between school as a compulsory institution and school as a sociable institution becomes manifest in the problem of playing truant which all schools are faced with and which educationalists have been seriously concerned with over the past few years.
Bernard (1986) studied the truant-strategies of Amsterdam secondary school pupils and discovered that nearly two-third of all students play truant now and again. Students of the highest levels of education play truant most often but also most strategically: they stay away from school, for example, to catch up with subject-matter, to prepare themselves for tests or, more generally, to take a day off because of school stress in order to be fresh the next day. Unlike students from general education, students from vocational schools play truant to protest against school compulsion (Bernard 1986).

With regard to this matter, serious plans which tend towards the free market model propose granting pupils of a certain age a number of truant days which they can take up as they like. As a matter of fact, these measures legalise what happens anayway.

Within the 'new sociability' at schools, various subcultural youth styles manifest themselves which coexist peacefully within the school. To these youth styles, a great many studies have been devoted, elaborating on the investigations of the Birmingham CCCS. De Waal (1987), for example, investigated the styles of dressing of female students. Te Poel (1982) studied the cultures of domestic school students, and the Hoogveld Institute - within the framework of their

school research - has collected a great number of data on the behaviour of students within groups and friendship relations.

Since the increase of structural youth unemployment in the mid-seventies, youth researchers have focussed on this field. However, the question in how far the threat of youth unemployment leads to a decrease in school motivation can hardly be answered without longitudinal research. As long as youngsters do not get confronted with the concrete problems of the job market, they look upon their career opportunities from an optimistic point of view. Looking back, however, unemployed youngsters realise that this optimism was wrong. Systematic investigations which analyse the interaction between social-political aspects, job market conditions, gender-specific and subjective factors and motives for the youth biography are still lacking. Research into youth unemployment is primarily attitude research, which nevertheless also examines how unemployment is experienced, but which most of all investigates the stability of value orientations (De Goede/Maassen 1986; Ten Have/Jehoel Gijsbers et al. 1986).

With respect to life-world research into school, another important observation can be made. Unlike, for example, West-Germany, Dutch research has not produced that many biographically oriented school analyses and school criticism that examine the qualities of school from the points of view of those who are actually involved (teachers and students) (Böhnisch/Scheffold 1985). Teachers in particular have not greatly contributed to this issue. However, if all field reports on compensatory education and other experiments - as being regularly published in school-related magazines - were subjected to close investigation, a rich variety of data with respect to the school-world would come to the surface.

## V The life-world of the family

I have already indicated that studies into family life are not widely available in Dutch youth research. This is probably due to the fact that family life is less accessible with respect to life-world analyses than the school-world or others. In addition, government as well as individual researchers seem to have little need for such studies. Recently, however, the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Culture has expressed the desirability for more attention for the issue of youth (girls) - and their life within the family.
Social-psychological and social-pedagogical family studies primarily focus on education styles, identity development and family climate; family is focussed upon as a field of socialisation rather than a life-world of youngsters (Schoorl 1986).
In contrast to this kind of studies, the above-mentioned Hoogveld Institute interprets and investigates family as an ecological zone in its own right. Attention centres on the question how youngsters

experience family life. As much as 90% of the interviewed 12-16-year-olds live in complete families; this corresponds to national data (in 1983, 91.8% of all 12-17-year-old youngsters lived in complete families; SCP 1985:28).

It is remarkable how many youngsters between 12 and 16 describe their relationships with their parents as good (Jeugd 1987). No one experiences this relationship as purely bad and only 1.7% describes the relationship as not too good and, in all cases, the relationship with the mother is experienced as (even) better. A good relationship with the father is connected with his competence and authority, whereas the relationship with the mother is determined by emotional values (Dijkman/Van der Linden 1987:46/47). Boys more often mention common interest as a basis for a good relationship with their fathers; girls mention the emotional quality of their good relationship with their mothers. The traditional gender-specific relations with 'factual' male and 'emotional' female orientations are reproduced within the family.

As youngsters grow up, the parent-child relations evolve from dependent, authority-based relations into equal, affective relations which youngsters acquire through independence and self-discipline.
The majority of Dutch youngsters of this age group feel that their parents participate in their lives with great interest and support them in case they should have problems. Youngsters would hardly ever keep things secret from their parents; as they grow up, their relationship becomes even more intense. They obey their parents because they identify themselves with them, because their parents set an example to them or because because they acknowledge their greater experience. Only a minority obeys for fear of punishment or because of promised rewards. Regardless of the fact whether or not they have a say in family matters, 96% of all youngsters say that they are satisfied.
All these aspects suggest growing tolerance margins within the context of family life which could be captured in the tendency: from an authoritarian family towards a negotiation family (De Swaan 1982; du Bois-Reymond/Jouber 1988).

The increased meaning of school and its social value for future professional careers is probably better demonstrated by the parent-child relationship than by the school-world itself by considering the children's answers to the question what their parents expect from them (see also Boef van der Meulen 1987; she directly interviewed parents and came up with similar results). Here, school and education got the highest value (54.5%) and were therefore ranked above the supposed parental expectations with regard to general values and norms concerning youth behaviour such as decency and good manners. A longitudinal investigation from the fifties up to the eighties would probably demonstrate that the dramatic turning point in the views of parents lays in the seventies, i.e. at the height of education reforms (Zinnecker 1987; an earlier study by the Hoogveld Institute, carried out in the mid-seventies, which posed similar questions as the

above-mentioned study already sketched the same picture (Van der Linden 1978).

Unfortunately, the researchers from the Hoogveld Institute do not connect the data of school and family-world; they fail to further clarify possible common grounds between the individual zones. We find very few clues for the discrepancies which youngsters perceive between their school and family experiences. It would be interesting, for example, to confront the relationship with teachers and students - interpreted according to the free market model - with the family model based on kinship and individualisation. In this way, it would be possible to answer the question how students/youngsters cope with discrepancies in behaviour of their main educators - parents and teachers. And as a matter of fact, this is the main criticism on the Hoogveld team: they do not exploit their life-world data extensively.

The second Hoogveld study focussed on 16-22-year-old youngsters. Although it largely confirmed the sunny picture of family life, some problems come to the surface which have to do with the acquisition of independence. Here it can be demonstrated that gender-specific distinctions still play a role. More so than boys, older girls have problems in being dependent on their parents and being under constant family control. They are more strongly involved with household matters and have fewer opportunities to protect their private lives from the family.
The data also show that complete faith in and openness towards parents change as youngsters grow up; parents are no longer involved in the discussion of relationship problems with friends; instead, these problems are discussed within the peergroup because youngsters fear that they will meet with disapproval rather than good advice.
For these precarious issues, youngsters reach a sort of compromise with their parents in the sense that they hold this field of intimacy away from their parents and that the parents accept this exclusion. Thus, the - generally (very) good - relationship between parents and children remains intact. In addition, children expect their parents to be prepared to learn new things, i.e. they should adapt their attitudes and norms to the 'spirit of the age'. This plays an important role in the relations between siblings; older brothers or sisters 'pave the way' for their younger brothers or sisters by pursuing their independence (going out in the evening, time of coming home). This meets with some opposition from parents, but they more readily accept these desires from younger children. (Only 6% of all 12-16-year-olds have no sister(s), 55.2% have one sister, 24.7% have two sisters and 14.1% have three or more sisters; cf. Dijkman/Van der Linden 1987:42).

By no means do older youngsters prefer to live indepently in all cases. They explicitly state that they miss the care and company of their family and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of living at home and living on their own. In general, in-depth studies should be carried out in order to get more insight into the present relations between parents and children and to examine the impact of structural

factors that play a role within the family such as, for example, unemployment of the father.

Finally, the importance which parents ascribe to the school career of their children does not diminish for older youngsters. However, parental expectations with respect to the behaviour of youngsters within the family play a larger role than was the case with the younger age-group. In our opinion, this could be an indication of the fact that the conflict potential between parents and adolescents increases.

Results on the attitudes of youngsters towards raising a family or alternative life styles are controversial. The Hoogveld Institute has showed that all 16-22-year-old youngsters, within a few years' time, expect to have a partner and a couple of children, a nice house and a car; they were absolutely certain that they would find a job (p. 82). To some extent, however, the population of this study is not representative and the specific problems of youth unemployment or the conflicts of women with sex-stereotyping are not in the centre of attention. If this were the case, like for example in an (albeit not representative) study of unemployed (Rotterdam) youngsters, a completely different picture would emerge. This investigation yielded strongly gender-specific distinctions, leading up to the following classification of young women:

- young women with a traditional life perspective with respect to family and labour;
- young women with an anti-traditional life perspective;
- the 'ambivalents', the largest middle group (Meijers/Peters 1987)

The 'traditionals' want to solve the dilemma of children versus job with the three phases model (education/job - raising a family - re-entering work as soon as the children have grown up). In contrast, the 'anti-traditionals' hold on to the compatibility of family and work or consider the option of not raising a family. The 'ambivalents' hesitate between these two positions. More interesting than the typology is the finding that <u>all</u> young women - much more so than young men - struggle with the conventional sex-stereotyping in trying to strike a balance between work and children/family. Furthermore, <u>all</u> young women first of all want to have their own income before starting to think about raising a family.
The most recent national inquiry among youngsters at the age of 16-24 also provides a somewhat subtler picture than does the Hoogveld Institute: the most important value of life appears to be good health (51.3%), followed by a good marriage (14.8%) and a nice family (12.8%). Nevertheless, youngsters do not regard marriage to be the one and only acceptable life style and 89.7% do <u>not</u> agree with the assumption that married people are generally happier than unmarried people (SCP 1985:76).

Summing up, it will be obvious that the present data on youth and family require further investigation, both with respect to inter-(intra-)generational relations and with respect to changes in the youngsters' standard biography and the impact of these shifts on the family. Particularly shifts in the female standard biography of mothers and daughters may turn out to be extremely clarifying.

## VI Research design and research methods of life-world studies

The majority of youth research that take the concept of life-world as a starting point expect (semi-)structured interviews or opinion ratings to shed light on the life-world of youngsters. However, as the present youth biography and the relation between the generations are more and more characterised by breaks and dissimilarities, research design and research methods that insufficiently take this complexity into account meet their limits. Therefore, it is a promising development that the interest of Dutch youth researchers in more meaningful theories is growing. Biographical, historical and longitudinal methods in combination with the life-world approach can be expected to yield the best results.

Three recent studies investigate the life-world of girls, working-class youngsters and - which is extremely rare - village youth by means of intensive participating observation, individual and group interviews (Naber 1985; Hazekamp 1985; Ter Bogt 1987). They focus on the non-school and non-family life-world and activities of youngsters: the street, the playground, the neighbourhood, youth clubs, friendship, hanging around, going out etc. The ethnographical tradition proves to be fruitful especially when it does not merely involve the investigation of the subjective experiences and action space of youngsters and youth cultures but also a description of the material and symbolical environment in which youngsters live.

A totally different kind of research is a sociological-criminological study in which conformist and deviant behaviour with respect to more or less serious offences of working-class youngsters is investigated by means of extensive biographical interviews (Miedema/Janssen 1986). This resulted in a typology that concentrates on the detailed and multiple transitions between conformist and deviant behaviour. This typology includes the individual youth biography, group life and parents and class cultures. The investigators are not so much lead by a social-ecological or psycho-ecological model nor by the ethnographical tradition. Rather, they connect an actor-oriented socialisation theory with sub-cultural youth theories of the British School and can thus demonstrate the strength of the inter-generational connection between youngsters and their parents in traditional working-class districts. Structural factors such as little education, few or no chances on the job market and the breakdown of old areas produce youngsters with more or less criminal careers.

Finally, I would also like to refer to a project which starts from the concept of the standard biography and which, by means of a longitudinal set-up, attempts to investigate the status passages school - education - work - family raising or other life styles of youngsters on the basis of repeated biographical interviews. Breaks in the standard biography and status passage (Fuchs 1983) are most of all expected to occur with girls/young women. Changes in the standard biography should be traced by means of intra-generational comparison between parents and children. Besides, non-family educators who guide youngsters throughout these status passages (school and professional educationalists, welfare workers etc.) are to be interviewed with respect to their capacities and skills. This 4-year project has recently started. (Meijers/Peters 1988). It is remarkable to notice that state financiers have begun to realise the importance of this kind of research. So far, the only longitudinal studies that have been undertaken are mobility studies within the school-world.

Over the past few years, Dutch youth research has surpassed the marginal position within the social sciences and is more and more orientating on European and international discussions. Thus it follows its object of knowledge, namely youth, which - although it has a national history and life-world - nevertheless also surpasses local boundaries. The problems and life styles of youth can no longer be fully understood within a national framework only.

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